

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

P.O. Box 419064, Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9064



October 4, 2011

CSSIN LETTER: 11-08

ALL IV-D DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS
ALL BOARDS OF SUPERVISORS

Reason for this Transmittal

- ☐ State Law or Regulation Change
- ☐ Federal Law or Regulation Change
- ☐ Court Order or Settlement Change
- ☐ Clarification requested by One or More Counties
- ☒ Initiated by DCSS

SUBJECT: PROMOTING A MORE ACCESSIBLE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM:
NEW TERMINOLOGY FOR PROGRAM CUSTOMERS

Consistent with the California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) core values of *fairness, respect* and *quality customer service* as set forth in our **DCSS 2010-2014 Strategic Plan**. DCSS is making changes in how we address our program customers. The purpose of this letter is to communicate to local child support agencies (LCSAs) the plan to make this change in terminology. See link to Strategic Plan: http://www.childsup.ca.gov/Portals/0/home/docs/DCSS_StratPlan%202010FINAL.pdf.

The child support program recognizes the importance of neutrality, impartiality and respect when working with our customers. The language we use to describe and interact with our customers sets a tone for our working relationship. The transition in terminology from *noncustodial parent (NCP)* and *custodial party (CP)*, is one more step in building a working partnership with both parents in striving for the financial self-sufficiency of the family through effective child support services and consistent payment of child support. DCSS is transitioning to the following terms:

- **Parent Paying Support (PPS) instead of non-custodial parent**
- **Parent/Party Receiving Support (PRS) instead of custodial parent**

There is much to consider in implementing this change. Throughout the history of the child support program there have been a range of terms, both legal and programmatic, that have been used to reference both parties. The established terminology, NCP and CP, has been in place for some time and permeates the program operations from our website, to our Child Support Enforcement system and forms. Rather than issuing an across-the-board mandate to make the change, immediately, the Department will employ a phased-in approach.

Phase One of the Terminology Change

The first phase of the terminology change will begin with updates to the *Child Support Handbook*. DCSS will then incorporate the new terminology in outreach materials, DCSS public website, and other program communication tools as updates occur to these communication resources. LCSAs are asked to make the changes to conform with this new terminology as each LCSA updates or creates new communications, outreach material, LCSA website changes or customer service script information.

The California Family Code and Judicial Council forms use the terms *Respondent* and *Petitioner* or *obligor* and *obligee* in addition to NCP and CP. This terminology is appropriate for legal processes and DCSS is not contemplating changing the terminology at this time.

Additionally, there are references to NCP and CP embedded in California Department of Social Services (CDSS) IV-A forms. DCSS will engage in a collaborative effort with CDSS to evaluate the forms that contain these terms and assess the impact of any change to these forms.

DCSS appreciates the support and assistance of the local agencies in implementing these changes. DCSS recognizes that every customer deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. It is important that our interaction with our customers through all communication channels reflects as consistent an approach as possible in terminology.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact Cindi Pocoroba at (916) 464-5883.

Sincerely,

BILL OTTERBECK
Deputy Director
Child Support Services Division